



Shelf No

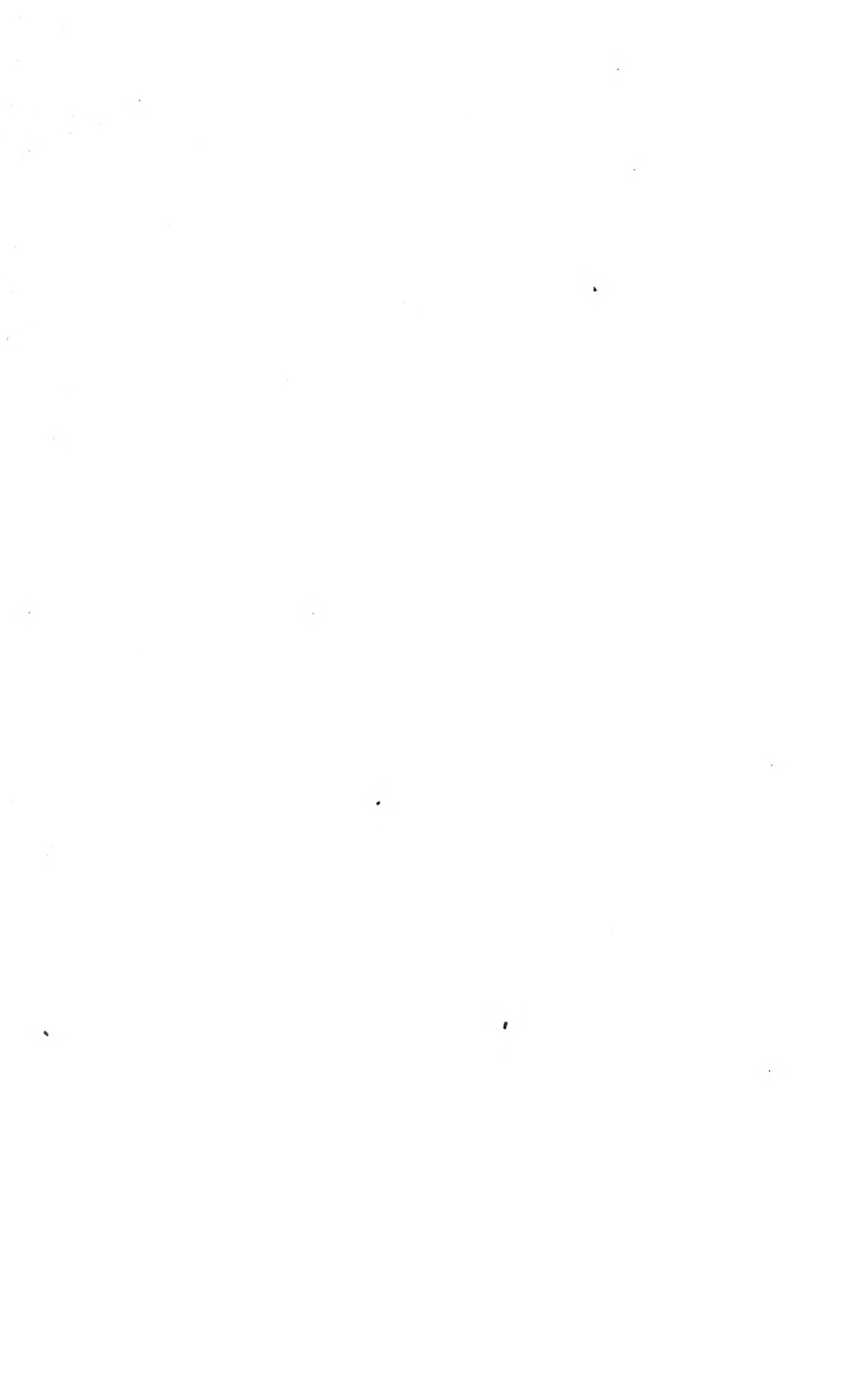
2403-115



GIVEN BY

Anonymous

Oct. 2. 1874



Oh, Slander Not the South !

Or

Two Virginians.

Oh, Slander Not the South !

Or

Two Virginians.

2163.15

BY THE AUTHOR OF

‘A TRIBUTE TO GROVER CLEVELAND,

FROM ONE OF THE PEOPLE.’

[PRINTED, NOT PUBLISHED.]

PRINTED BY
THE STILLINGS PRESS,
BOSTON.

Chas. W. Smith.

1894

DEC 13 1894

RECEIVED

DEC 13 1894

RECEIVED



Oh, Slander Not the South!

OR

TWO VIRGINIANS.

Vera Pro Gratis.

Oh, slander not the South! nor say she fails
In later years to match her sons of yore;
The war's two greatest heroes, highest souls,
'Mother of states and statesmen'! are thy own;
Mother of soldiers also, thou art still,
For LEE and THOMAS both were sons of thine.

Hero of Chickamauga! cheaper men
Staging themselves before the public eye
Have worn the laurels which should deck thy brow.
But thou would'st not complain! Did'st thou complain?
Thou who in life refused'st to even wear
The tardy honors which were half thy due
But which thy Roman heart esteemed unearned!¹
Did'st thou complain in life when calumny,
Suspicion and distrust at ev'ry step
Paid thy devotion to thy country's cause?
Thou who thy State, thy friends, thy fellow-soldiers

The figures attached to certain words refer to the numbers of the notes at the end of the poem.

And ev'rything that time endeared had'st left,
 Left for the cause that now almost disowned thee!
 Did'st thou complain in life when trickery
 Deprived thee of command so well deserved? ²
 Did'st thou complain when blinded ignorance ³
 Carped at thy speed and sought to urge thee on ⁴
 To acts thy judgment never could approve?
 Hard was thy lot! In bitterness thou said'st
 "*This must I do, teach myself not to feel!*" ⁵
 And so thou did'st—thy feelings to repress
 And serve thy country uncomplaining still,
 Returning duty for indignity;
 And so thou did'st; and then all calumny
 And all the rancor of relentless foes
 Saw thee unmoved and only brighter made
 The spotless mirror of that stoic soul!

No raw apprentice to the soldier's art
 The war found thee, but victor first as last—
 Last in promotion, first in victory! ⁶
 No blunders of success or of defeat
 Thy reputation as a soldier stain!
 No pyramids of dead made pedestals
 Mounted on which thou dearly gained'st applause,
 When skill a bloodless victory had won!
 Nor were thy battles gained by massing men
 Double and treble thy opponents' force.
 No shameful Shiloh rises gaunt, 'gainst thee
 And points his fleshless finger at thy work!
 No wasted ranks of soldiers, men of thine,
 Slaughtered—but not in battle—freeze the heart!
 Shorn of the army thou had'st made thy own,
 Deprived of men, of implements of war,
 Distrusted, hampered and denied fair play,

Badgered and bullied, threatened, ordered out,
 In spite of foes before and foes behind,
 Obstructing, both, thy way to victory;
 In spite of enemies within thy camp
 Intriguing to supplant thee in command, —
 Self-poised, serene, thou kept'st thy onward path!

As meets a cliff the roar of sullen seas,
 The ROCK OF CHICKAMAUGA murmurs met,
 Orders and counter orders, spume and spray,
 Another "On to Richmond!" or "Berlin,"
 A military mob, by panic crazed!⁷
 'Unhasting and unresting,' undismayed,
 Delaying till the hour to strike arrived,
 Thy skill supreme the happy moment seized,
 And saved thy country in that glorious fight,
 The last of thy unbroken victories!
 Yet neither then, nor in long after years,
 One gen'rous word escaped thy enemies
 To recognize a country saved by thee,
 But slander and detraction to the end.
 Slander in life, detraction after death,⁸
 While cheaper men, for cheaper glories gained,
 Bent under burden of rewards received,
 Nor ceased to hear the song of fulsome praise!

Dearer than rank or glory of thy own,
 And closer to thy heart, thy soldiers were.
 Witness thy care in battle for their lives!
 Witness an army saved by thee alone!⁹
 Witness their love for thee, thy words for them,
 When gratitude for thy great victories
 Sought thy acceptance of some rich reward:
*"If you have gifts to give, give not to me,¹⁰
 Give to my soldiers, needier than I."*

Disclaiming merit, restive under praise,
 To them thy victories attributing,
 And 'lowly wise,' as in the poet's prayer,
 With thy great spirit of self-sacrifice;
 Careless of stratagems of meaner minds,
 Disdaining with their intrigues to contend,
 Thy name and fame thou left'st to history.

If persecution followed thee in life,
 If later times have scant atonement made,
 The long, slow years that overpower lies
 Shall, drop by drop, make mark upon the stone,
 The cold and careless hearts that know thee not.
 Time and the critic's all unsparing eye
 Find on thy life no semblance of a stain.
 Thou hast not earned the fame which some have earned;
 No pitying praise to thee its tribute brings;
 No veil, in decency, needs must be drawn
 O'er half thy actions when we speak of thee,
 For thou wast simple and of mould heroic;
 That ideal Brutus which our Shakspeare drew
 Is not a nobler character than thine.
 No Greek's or Roman's would surpass thy fame ¹¹
 If we had bards or histories like theirs,
 Or if a grov'ling age knew gold from gilt.

So, too, wast thou superior to fortune,
 Son of the South and leader of her armies!
 No vulgar Bonaparte whose sordid soul
 Centred in self, made stepping-stones of men,
 Playthings of peoples, when the siren song
 Of empty glory stole their brains away
 And lulled them into slavery and death;
 Who, monster more than man, jeered at the waste

Of countless lives of Frenchmen, lost to freedom,
 The little while his mushroom empire lasted,
 Then, gewgaws gone, revealed the thing beneath!
 When fortune favored, aping Deity,
 When fortune frowned, less manly than a man!
 Thou — loyal to the race, loyal to duty,
 As to thy inmost soul she showed herself —
 Kept'st perfect poise when ruin fronted thee,
 Steeled'st thy sad heart to that inevitable,*
 And nobler in defeat than victory,
 Unchanged, undaunted, served'st the Master still.

Why sound the praise of these? It is not they,
 Men of their mould, that this age venerates.
 Admiring soldiers loved their simple ways
 And gave the Gen'als old, familiar names.
 We put a stigma on simplicity,
 Admire it as a cloak to cover craft
 And men who by its aid attain their ends;
 Or in that phrase — one of the gems of speech
 Which typify our times — the men who 'get there,'
 No matter how, but still the men who 'get there';
 Successful men, the 'fat and greasy' ones
 Whom Shakspeare notes as fleeing from the poor,
 The poor and unsuccessful; men like LEE
 And like his brother THOMAS, two twin souls!
 Sweep on and worship other ones than these,
 Oh thou, the many-headed! *as thou hast!*
 Theirs are not characters that thou can'st feel;
 Crowds did not follow them or shout their praises,
 Nor did they gain applause of newspapers.
 They were not trumpeters of their own deeds,
 Puffed not themselves and their own favorites,
 Nor slurred, nor sullied fellow-soldiers' fame.

* His surrender.

They sought not office, fawned not upon thrift,
 No greed for gifts their independence shook,
 No greed for gain their honor set at naught.
 They to the windward kept no anchors cast,
 Cringed not to pow'r, with no one curried favor,
 Stooped to no jockey tricks their ends to gain,
 Had none as friends whose friendship was not honor,
 Nor made commodity of reputation
 For sordid aims or cheap applause to win.
 As pure in speech as they were pure in acts,
 No vulgar oaths defiled their high commands,
 No vulgar tales set on the ribald laugh;
 But simple, kindly, lowly in their lives
 Whose 'daily beauty' sought and made no mark,
 They who had struggled for the light that leads,¹²
 They who had had a double foe to fight,
 They, the two greatest captains of the war,
 The silent soldiers, leaving deeds to speak,
 Unmarked, unmoved, let others reap rewards.¹³

In humble graves they lie. No tow'ring tomb
 In some great city, dwarfing others' shrines,
 Bids crowds approach and marvel at their greatness!
 Peers of each other, peerless otherwise,
 As in their lives they sought not gauds or pomps,
 As in their lives their characters were spotless,
 So now, no stained and mould'ring monuments
 Need rise to them. Nor storm, nor time, can touch
 The lesson and the legacy they leave.

Deep in the Southron's heart embalmed is LEE,
 First on the Southron's lips his name to rise.
 How have we treated THOMAS? how received
 The pearls of that rare nature, thrown to us?

Let his career and let his saddened life,
His hastened death¹⁴ and thirty years reply !

If we must worship let us worship those
Who have the virtues needed by our lives
If we would live as men are meant to live,
Not live lives sordid, dull and colorless,
A treadmill round, a penny in a slot !
As though the stars had ceased to shine in heav'n,
The ocean's grandeur gone and earth's bright beauty !
By these encompassed, meant from these to learn,
With Mammon looks we mouse along the ground.
The age is base ; and bows itself before
Idols of wood. For 'spirits finely touched'
What should it care ? The ceaseless grind of trade
Brought to our homes, our firesides, yea, our prayers ;
The money-getting talk that never palls,
But sits with us at board and lies in bed,
And poisons children's minds with greed and gain ;
The ceaseless craving for the shams of life,
The scorn of quiet, simple, homely ways,
Of all the deeper, purer springs of joy ;
The low effects of party politics
Invading ev'rywhere the people's life ;
The daily paper, bringing all things down
To that dead level suited to success,
Suppressing all that's individual,
Running in ruts and pandering to please,
Ignoring truth whenc'er it cuts or hurts,
Promoting worst of worships, fashion, wealth,
Exalting shams, whatever 'draws' or 'pays,'
Cheap'ning the quiet, the obscure, the good,
By that same law which keeps itself alive,—
All these things war against our better selves.

Oh, where we ail the most, seek there to cure!
 Learn of the purest, loftiest and best,
 Sit at their feet, imbue us with their spirit,
 That we may save us from the canker sore,
 This greed for gain and notoriety.
 As from the din and dirt of vulgar streets
 The passer, turning, stands in some cathedral,
 Hushed, awed, abashed, compelled to reverence;
 So from the greed and trickery of trade,
 So from the daily press and politics,
 So from the eating sore that money makes,
 The atmosphere diffused by noble minds
 Kindles the spark that is within us all;
 And thus, admiring men of rarest mould,
 Milton or Angelo, earth's highest souls,
 Or mutely pondering on Wordsworth's verse,
 The lowest rise. The good that is within us
 Answers the call. Our lives are deepened, brightened.
 For this are poets born; for this our heroes,
 Our LEES, our THOMASES. 'Tis not in battle
 They win their greatest victories, but here;
 Here in the lesson which their lives impart;
 Here in the legacies they leave mankind.
 High o'er the voice whose orders won the fight
 Resound their lasting voices, SURSUM CORDA!

C. S. II.

BOSTON, Sept. 10th, 1894.



NOTES.

PAGE 3. NOTE 1.

“The tardy honors which were half thy due,
But which thy Roman heart esteemed unearned.”

In February, 1868. President Johnson requested the Senate to confirm Thomas as brevet lieutenant-general, and brevet general of the army. As the President and General Grant were then at enmity, it was believed that the President intended to displace General Grant and assign Thomas to the command of the army. Thomas at once objected to the proposed action of the Senate and asked the President to recall the nomination. The grounds on which Thomas made this request had no reference to political intrigues but were characteristic of the man and are plainly expressed in his letter to the Senate: “My services since the war do not merit so high a compliment and it is now too late to be regarded as a compliment for services during the war.” Thus the President's project fell through, owing to the refusal of Thomas.

PAGE 4, NOTE 2.

“Did'st thou complain in life when trickery
Deprived thee of command so well deserved?”

On the 24th October, 1862, the place of General Buell was to be filled. Thomas was clearly entitled to this command. Evidently, the authorities at Washington — this term is always conveniently vague for some writers — thought so, else the following incident would not have occurred. Thomas ranked General Rosecrans, whom President Lincoln chose to appoint in Buell's place. The manner in which Mr. Lincoln surmounted this obstacle, is thus described by a person then familiar with the facts, an admirer of Mr. Lincoln. “President Lincoln solved the difficulty by quietly moving his pen through the date of Rosecrans' commission and writing over August 16, 1862, March 21. of the same year.” Irrespective of the fact by whom this “forgery” (as the above writer, Mr. Donn Piatt, terms it) was committed, it was, so far as its effect on Thomas was con-

cerned, a despicable trick. By it, the high and trusting nature of Thomas, who could not be made to easily understand such baseness, was strongly affected. When he first heard that Rosecrans had been preferred, Thomas, who seldom protested, wrote to General Halleck a noble letter of remonstrance, modestly referring to services rendered and to his own rights. When General Halleck, replying, said, among other things, "You are mistaken about General Rosecrans being your junior," Thomas replied, saying, "I should not have addressed you in the first place if I had known that General Rosecrans' commission was dated prior to mine. The letter was written not because I desired the command but for being superseded by a junior in rank, when I felt there was no good cause for so treating me. I have no objections to serving under General Rosecrans, now that I know that his commission dates prior to mine, but I must confess that I should feel deeply mortified should the President place a junior over me without a just cause, although the law authorizes him to do so, should he see fit." Afterwards when Thomas found how he had been "jockeyed" by the trick played upon him, his utter disgust was expressed by the following language, used to General Halleck, which affords a key to Thomas's whole subsequent conduct during the war and shows he had given up the last hope of decency in or fair treatment from the people in power at Washington. "I have made my last protest while the war lasts. You may hereafter put a stick over me, if you choose to do so. I will take care, however, to so manage my command, whatever it may be, as not to be involved in the mistakes of the stick."

PAGE 4, NOTE 3.

"Did'st thou complain when blinded ignorance," etc.

It was not merely by the event at Nashville that Thomas was vindicated from the storm of reproaches let loose upon him by his military superiors in rank, complete as this vindication was. It is the facts shown by the suppressed despatches, which passed at the time, that vindicate Thomas and show the ignorance and, it would almost appear, the wilful blindness of the authorities in the East. The serene reply of Thomas to the hectoring language used by General Grant was, "I can only say I have done all in my power to prepare and if you should deem it necessary to relieve me, I shall submit without a murmur." (Despatch of Dec. 8th, 1864.) Nothing could more clearly exhibit the contrast between these two men than such a reply by the one to such language of the other.

PAGE 4, NOTE 4.

“Carped at thy speed and sought to urge thee on.”

Exactly the same charge that was made by his enemies against Thomas, of slowness and over-caution, was made against Lee in the early part of the war, and the answer made by “Stonewall” Jackson to the criticism upon Lee, well applies to the case of Thomas. “Lee is cautious. He ought to be. He is not slow,” Thomas was the only general on the Union side who, while on the one hand he gained splendid victories, on the other never lost a battle, never suffered any serious repulse, never made any serious blunder and never could be even charged with having sacrificed his soldiers. In view of these facts, would it not have been fortunate for the Union cause, if the two generals who, in their despatches and otherwise, have emphasized the slowness of Thomas, had themselves had a little of the same slowness? These two generals might, in that case, have possibly avoided the gigantic blunder elsewhere alluded to; the hosts of men, on more than one occasion, unnecessarily sacrificed; and the most disgraceful defeat sustained by the Union arms during the war, the bare mention of which is now generally avoided at the West, unless, as in the present case, it is necessary to mention it, to do justice to the dead; showing how little credence is given to the fictions invented to cover up the disgrace of Shiloh. Here arises one distinct point of superiority in Thomas that has not been dwelt upon; indeed has hardly been noticed. He did not learn to be successful at the expense of the lives of Union soldiers. None of his battles, early or late, were “wadings through slaughter,” immense and useless, to success on subsequent occasions. He was as careful of his men, and as victorious, at first as he was at last. General Sheridan, belonging as he did to the Grant clique, seems to have joined in the Grant cry,—that Thomas, though a good general, was too slow for offensive operations and too cautious for an independent command. But General Sheridan, brave man and gallant soldier though he was, appears to have found, on a memorable occasion, that the ‘slowness’ of Thomas was too ‘fast’ for General Sheridan. When Thomas was making that stubborn resistance, which gained for him the most significant and appropriate war-name earned by any general during the war,—“The Rock of Chickamauga”—and when he was pressed by the overpowering force of Confederates that seemed able to sweep him and his men from the earth, General Sheridan was ordered to bring his troops to the front. He flatly refused; swearing, it is said, like the army in Flanders, and declaring he would not take his men into a slaughter organized by fools. It is a matter of history that he refused to obey the order and marched away with his troops; and this, too, while other officers, similarly situated, obeyed the order and took their men to the aid of Thomas. The last place where to look for facts of this kind is military histories and the memoirs of generals written by themselves.

PAGE 4, NOTE 5.

“This must I do, teach myself not to feel!”

These were Thomas's own words: “I have taught myself not to feel!” Coming from the heart of this reticent soldier, what volumes they speak against the manner in which he was treated by those in authority!

PAGE 4, NOTE 6.

“Last in promotion, first in victory!”

The first Union victory won in the West was the battle of Mill Springs, (Ky.) which was won by Thomas on January 19th, 1862. In the congratulatory order of President Lincoln, issued upon this remarkable victory, which secured Kentucky to the Union, dismayed the Confederates, who thought or affected to think the Northerners “could not fight,” and put heart into the defeated and discouraged Unionists, the name of Thomas, to whom the victory was due, was not mentioned or alluded to. Nor was this all. The promise of subsequent recognition contained in Mr. Lincoln's order, was never redeemed. Other officers, who had done nothing, were promoted. Thomas received, as the reward of his splendid victory, the indignity not to say insult, of being passed by, unnamed in the very order celebrating the victory! The reason given for this extraordinary conduct was, it is said, that Thomas was a Southerner by birth. Whether the act, or the reason given for the act, was the more creditable to the then President may be a question.

General Buell's order gave the credit to General Thomas and his men. The legislature of Ohio passed a vote of thanks to General Thomas and his troops. The President did not mention Thomas. Upon Thomas's official report of the victory being made, not the slightest notice was taken at Washington. One of Thomas's biographers (Van Horne) says: “Had he [Thomas] then been appointed a Major-General, he would have ranked both Grant and Buell and would have been entitled to an independent command early in the war.” Thomas, who so seldom complained of anything, in one of his rare moments of indignation, long afterwards, said: “There is one thing about my promotions which is exceedingly gratifying. I never yet received a commission they [meaning President Lincoln and the military authorities] dared to withhold.” He was promoted when public opinion forced his promotion, not otherwise.

If, like some other generals, he had had an influential member of Congress backing him through thick and thin, he might have blundered, as other generals blundered, and have been promoted as they were promoted, in spite of their blunders. To show how immaterial disgraceful misconduct, and 'bloody blunders' in the field, were to those who, (in the elegant language of politics) had "a political pull" with President Lincoln during the war, and to show the veracity of the statements and the justice of the grounds on which these "influential" generals were often advanced, in spite of their misconduct, compare the speech made by the Hon. E. B. Washburn of Illinois in the House of Representatives, at Washington, on May 2d, 1862, (quoted, in part, in Abbott's *Life of General Grant*, p. 80) and the private letter written to General Grant by his own chief of staff, General John A. Rawlins, dated before Vicksburg, June 6th, 1863, which letter is given in full in Piatt's *Life of Thomas*, at p. 318. This comparison is interesting and instructive, as illustrating the manner in which some generals were backed up by their very deficiencies, while others, like Thomas, (witness Mill Springs and Chickamauga) seem to have been backed down by their very victories. But the "historians" of the present age do not descend to such comparisons as this. Horace Walpole, when his father was ill at ease, offered to entertain the retired statesman by reading, and suggested history. "Read me anything else!" said Sir Robert, "that, I know, must be lies." Not a few recent military writers, bearing that saying in mind, evidently proceed upon the principle, the more lies, the more history.

PAGE 5, NOTE 7.,

"A military mob by panic crazed!"

For a description of the conduct of "the authorities at Washington" just before the battle at Nashville, see the despatches and orders of those authorities, and the replies of Thomas. So shameful to those authorities are these despatches (some of the most material of which were suppressed at the White House, during the presidency of General Grant, and remained unknown to the country long after the death of Thomas) that few biographers care to give even the more important of them; but, out of tenderness to the "authorities," hurry over this episode of the war. Even a writer so complacent to the powers that were as Professor Coppée, while shrinking from giving the despatches, describes the scene thus: "And now was heard from the Government authorities—the President, Mr. Stanton,

the Secretary of War, and General Halleck at Washington and General Grant at City Point [Va.] — such a jargon of grumbling, scolding voices, such howls of impatience, such vulgar innuendos, as never before beset a poor general who knew his duty and was trying his utmost to do it, feeling sure besides that the fault-finders did not know anything about it. They were the blunderers, not Thomas.” — (Great Commanders, General Thomas, p. 258.) It was not the fault of these men, nor of the President, that the country did not suffer the lasting disgrace, perhaps ruin, which would have followed the removal of Thomas at this crisis. This removal was prevented only by the delay of General Halleck who appears to have lost his head a little less completely than the rest of them. It is now clear that what threw these authorities into their panic and led to their wild words, and confused actions and orders, — replacing Thomas by General Schofield, replacing Thomas by General Logan — was that their eyes were now, by contemplation of possible defeat at Nashville, opened to the gigantic blunder they had committed in denuding the Western country of everything in the shape of a properly disciplined army, with appropriate cavalry, military material and appointments, adequate to meet Hood’s army, Forrest’s efficient cavalry of 12,000 men and the whole reserve force of the South, which at the slightest success of Hood and Forrest, would have swelled the ranks of those enterprising leaders. Had disaster happened to Thomas, with his hastily gathered and undisciplined force (so far as almost all of it was concerned) with his deficient cavalry, with his want of the necessary military munitions and transportation (see the contemporary despatches, particularly the suppressed ones) or had he struck — as he was not only urged to do but damned for not doing — before the iron was hot, whom then would the country have blamed for its ruin? Not Thomas, who had strained every nerve to do his utmost, but those who, without any military necessity, had stripped him to the condition in which the despatches show he was. (See particularly his despatch to General Halleck of date Dec. 21, 1864. It is impossible to read this despatch, and then to think of its suppression, without feelings of the strongest indignation against men capable of such wickedness.) Irritated by the offensive language of the Washington despatches even after the battle, Thomas in this despatch reminds the authorities of a few facts. “We cannot control the elements and you must remember that, to resist Hood’s advance into Tennessee, I had to reorganize and almost thoroughly equip the force now under my command. I fought the battle [of Nashville] with troops but partially equipped.” He then speaks of his being left to cross rivers, in pursuit of Hood, without pontoons and with little transportation. He then reminds General Halleck that General Sherman, on his march to the sea, had taken with him the complete or-

ganization of the Military Division of the Mississippi, thoroughly equipped with ammunition, supplies and transportation, leaving him (Thomas) only two corps, partially stripped of their transportation; and this when he (Thomas) had the task of opposing the advance into Tennessee of that army which had resisted the advance of the whole Union army of the Military Division of the Mississippi to Atlanta, from the beginning to the close of the campaign, and when, moreover, Hood's army had been strengthened by Forrest and his cavalry.

Under the term "authorities" the blame is dissipated. But no single man cuts a worse figure, in those transactions, than General Grant. His hectoring, bullying attitude towards Thomas is especially noticeable. Even after the splendid victory of Nashville was gained, and the country saved from what might have been the ruin resulting from the prodigious blunder of Generals Grant and Sherman, the grudging reluctance of General Grant to the promotion of Thomas is plainly expressed. This line of action was nothing new in the treatment of Thomas. What had occurred after Mill Springs; upon the appointment of Rosecrans; and after Chickamauga, was again repeated. Promotion the authorities, this time, dared not withhold: for the country would not have endured that. But the old spite and venom were there and plainly appeared. It was only the manifestation which was different.

Men who wish to see bare justice done to the memory of Thomas — and one would think it was, to use the vernacular, "about time" — may be excused for now telling some part of the truth, and for calling a spade a spade in telling it. It is to be feared that all the truth will never be told. If it had not been for a recent biography of Thomas, written by two fearless and outspoken men, important facts would probably have been forever hushed up. The truth has been garbled or suppressed, and gross injustice done, not only by generals and their own books, but by "military secretaries," post-graduates in the arts of literary lickspittleism, toadies by nature whose intrinsic talents have been improved by years of cultivation as parasites and hangers on of notables in this country and in Europe. It is this kind of men who have been hired to write "history to order." Their rubbish, in a few years, will have gone to kindle fires. But 'as a rat can flood a province,' so a hireling hack-writer, especially when his trash is certified to, (a very unwise certification!) may, for a time, affect the reputation of the greatest man, the noblest and loftiest character brought out or developed, on the Union side, during the Civil War. But even writers of a far different kind have erred. Even biographers of Thomas, except two, have not had the manliness to speak out in reference to the conduct of President Lincoln and General Grant towards Thomas. Did those biographers take it for granted that these characters could not bear

the truth? Did they think that no one cared for the memory of Thomas? Some of President Lincoln's biographers apparently imagine they can now atone for the wrong Mr. Lincoln did to Thomas, by themselves speaking, in their books, of Thomas as Mr. Lincoln should have spoken of him in life. Do they think that their eulogies of today can do away with the sufferings of that troubled life, or, 'soothe the dull, cold ear of death?' A frank confession of facts would have been better than their praise. The writers of our period have singular notions of the "truth of history." As a specimen of the brazen effrontery of some of them, should be noticed their attempt to bury the disgrace of Shiloh under mountains of lies. What renders this attempt peculiarly infamous is that it almost invariably happens, in the course of the narrative, that the commanding generals are "whitewashed" at the expense of the brave sub-officers and soldiers to whom alone it was due that there was any battle at all, on that Sunday morning, and not one wild and bloody rout. To notice only one feature, the vast mass of evidence relating to the surprise and unprotected condition of Union troops, as shown by statements and letters of officers and men, written directly after the battle, detailing facts within their own personal knowledge; all this is either ignored or pronounced to be tales of men who had no opportunities of understanding the situation. Nor are these writers less dishonest in their attempts to "hush up" facts which, just after the battle, were not in controversy at all.

In spite of the great facilities for suppressing evidence in former times, as compared with our own, two centuries of English flunkiness have not buried Cromwell, or altered the world's estimation of his character and his work. Though today there is not to be found a monument erected to him from Carlisle to Land's End; though the greatest writers (as Hume) and the smallest have, down to our own time, united to traduce and belittle him, he stands, with all his faults, in the estimation of thinking people, the greatest man of modern times, of the statesman and soldier class; above the Marlboroughs, the Fredericks, and the Napoleons. Yet such examples, and all the difference of recent times, seem never to have occurred to the suppressing scribblers of today.

“Slander in life, detraction after death.”

One of the latest biographers of Thomas who seems to have been personally familiar with the facts says:—

“His [Thomas’s] friends, soon after his burial, went earnestly to work to try to obtain the suppressed despatches. Every attempt made at Washington was blocked. Finally, nearly a year afterwards, they were secured, in spite of continuing refusals at the White House, and as persistent declarations that the whole official story had been told.” (Donn Piatt’s *Life of Thomas*, p. 651.) This was during the presidency of General Grant. It must be remembered that these despatches were essential to show the utter groundlessness of the attacks which, up to the time of Thomas’s death, were made upon him in connection with the battle of Nashville; the same malignant attacks upon his reputation which these despatches, now published in their entirety, completely repel. Not only were the days of Thomas up to the moment of his death clouded and troubled by these attacks, which the publication of the suppressed despatches would have prevented or rendered absurd, but the following facts appear. Ordinarily so self-contained, Thomas felt aggrieved at what he pronounced an ‘outrageous’ attack upon himself, published in the *New York Tribune*, and written or inspired, as Thomas was informed and believed, by General Schofield, whom Thomas regarded as a bitter and malignant enemy of his and one of those who had intrigued against him and sought to undermine him before, and up to the time of the battle of Nashville. It must be remembered that as to these matters Thomas had private information, and that he was the last man to be over-suspicious or unjust. Indeed, forbearance to others was so marked a trait in his character, that it seemed at times excessive and subjected him, even with friends who did not fully understand his nature, to the imputation of want of sufficient confidence in himself and of assertive force, qualities which he possessed in full measure. An account of these intrigues and attempts to undermine Thomas and of the last malignant attack which had such an effect upon him, immediately before his death, will be found in Van Horne’s *Life of Thomas*, at p. 489. So indignant was Thomas at the article in the *Tribune*, that having called for certain documents, he sat down to reply with his own hand. While in the midst of composition, he was seized with an attack which was soon followed by his death. The writer of the *Tribune* article, had been successful in his attempt, possibly beyond even *his* desire. Had the material despatches been furnished, his venom could not have quickened the beating of that noble heart, or, perhaps, stilled it forever. Had the whole story of Nash-

ville been furnished — as at the White House was promised, and as his friends were positively assured at the White House had been done — not only would Thomas have been spared some of the later troubles and his last days have been peaceful, but, in all probability he would not have died at the comparatively early age at which he did die. Can a sadder picture be presented than such a death of such a man!

PAGE 5, NOTE 9.

“Witness an army saved by thee alone.”

At Chickamauga, where the same “slowness” and “excessive caution” which afterwards won the most brilliantly fought battle of the war at Nashville, undertook and accomplished the most daring task of the war and saved the army from the blunders of superiors. The Confederate general D. H. Hill, who had personal knowledge of the situation, when, after the war, he enumerated the three distinct causes which led to the failure of the Southern arms, pronounced, as one of these, the conduct of Thomas at Chickamauga. That conduct was no mere rallying of retreating troops. To appreciate what Thomas (then a subordinate under General Rosecrans) accomplished, and the blunders of the Washington authorities, the whole campaign should be studied. (See the detailed and graphic account by General Henry V. Boynton, who rendered such gallant service upon the occasion on the Union side.) “Eventually,” says General Boynton, “the Chickamauga campaign will stand in the history of our war as unequalled in its strategy by any other movement of the contest, * * * and furthermore it will stand as a substantial Union victory.” No one had a higher appreciation of the conduct of Thomas on this memorable occasion, than General (afterward President) Garfield, who was present at the battle. (See Garfield’s oration upon Thomas delivered before the Society of the Army of the Cumberland, Nov’r, 1870.) The individual service of Thomas here was unparalleled and unapproached by any service, rendered by any one man, on any one occasion during the war. Even a person who is familiar with the political influences, the petty jealousies and the miserable squabbles, which then prevailed among the authorities at Washington, yet wonders how such a splendid exhibition of generalship, an army saved and an humiliating defeat turned into a victory, did not now give Thomas a major-generalship at once. But the authorities at Washington were then too busy, trying to conceal their blundering orders and their neglect, in this campaign.

PAGE 5, NOTE 10.

"If you have gifts to give, give not to me."

Thomas made it a rule of his life to refuse gifts. He considered that they might put his own independence in jeopardy and that, as a public officer, he ought not to accept them. When the citizens, at Cincinnati and Louisville, proposed to raise a large sum of money to be used in some appropriate gift to him, he declined to receive anything and suggested that, if the money was to be raised, it should be devoted to founding a fund for disabled soldiers and the widows and orphans of those who had fallen during the war. (See his letter of January 17th, 1865.) He even refused a service of silver plate offered by the citizens of Nashville. A medal and a badge, so offered that he could not refuse, were the slight gifts he accepted.

PAGE 6, NOTE 11.

"No Greek's or Roman's would surpass thy fame," etc.

Though to the modern style it seems stilted and far-fetched to compare the great men of our own time, with the heroes of antiquity, yet, in the case of Thomas, such a comparison seems hardly forced or out of the way. Contrasted with his contemporaries, who, whatever merits they possessed, were — with one exception, on the Confederate side — absorbed in the self-seeking of modern life and the intrigues of the hour, Thomas seems like a man who had stepped out of the pages of Plutarch. Indeed, there are not a few points of resemblance between the character and career of Thomas and the character and career of him whom Cicero pronounced the greatest of the Greeks, the hero of Leuctra and Mantinea. Both, if they did indeed not excel all their contemporaries as military commanders, stood at least in the first rank; yet both were, by nature and habit, students, fonder of retirement and study than of war. Both loved moderate means, the *lata paupertas*, and shunned wealth rather than sought it. Alike in their reticence, in their unobtrusiveness, 'strong, still men, averse from display,' neither sought distinction but distinction found both. Both were remarkable for their exact truthfulness, their love of veracity and straightforwardness, and neither could endure intrigue. They were alike in their patriotism, in their disinterestedness and in their loftiness of character. To both, in public and in private life, duty and not personal advancement or glory, was ever the standard of action.

Unlike Epaminondas, Thomas was never defeated or repulsed in battle; but, like Epaminondas, not being in command, he saved from destruction an army in which he was a subordinate. Both were persecuted, by certain of their countrymen, to the verge of death; and this not for any fault of theirs but while they had served their country to the utmost and had done, if possible, more than their duty. Better, perhaps, for Thomas, certainly far more creditable for his country, would it have been, could the parallel have been completed, and could Thomas have died in the arms of victory, at Nashville, like Epaminondas at Mantinea.

PAGE 8, NOTE 12.

“ They who had struggled for the light that leads.”

“ My husband,” wrote the wife of Lee to a friend, “ has wept tears of blood over this terrible war; but he must as a man and Virginian share the destiny of his State, which has solemnly pronounced for independence.” “ I know you will blame me,” wrote Lee to his sister, “ but you must think as kindly of me as you can and believe that I have endeavored to do what I thought right.” To show further the diversity of feeling and opinion, the sisters of Thomas, in Virginia, after he had chosen the Union side, refused to have any further intercourse with him. Can any deeper lesson of political charity be imparted to the people of this country than that taught by the fact that, of two such men as Thomas and Lee, both Virginians, both West Pointers, both officers of the regular army from their graduation up to the time of secession, both having homes and loved ones where they were born, one sided with the Union, the other with his State!

PAGE 8, NOTE 13.

“ Unmarked, unmoved, let others reap rewards.”

It is well known that Thomas was more than once solicited to allow his name to be used in connection with the Presidency and that he uniformly and positively refused. It is also well known that, after the war, munificent offers were made to Lee, among them of positions with

large salaries attached, where his duties would have been nominal, and by Englishmen of an estate and income in England. He rejected all those offers and, to the day of his death, remained actively engaged as president of Washington University, in Virginia, on a salary of \$3,000 a year.

PAGE 9, NOTE 14.

“His hastened death.”

One of Thomas's latest biographers charges that the story of Thomas's death is “little less than the history of an assassination.” Well may the biographer call the story “startling”! (See the entire last chapter of Donn Piatt's life of Thomas. It is stated, in this work, that the concluding chapters are by General H. V. Boynton.) It is to be hoped for the credit of this country, and the reputation of General Grant, that there has been some mistake as to some of the statements of fact. But if the facts, as stated, are correct, they should be widely published. It is surely time, now, that the suppression and concealment of facts, in connection with the history and career of Thomas, should forever cease.

The statements above alluded to, as made by Mr. Van Horne, in his life of Thomas, describing the relations between Thomas and General Schofield, have never been shown to be erroneous. Those statements have produced merely such exhibitions of malice towards the memory of Thomas as that published—under pretense of reviewing Mr. Van Horne's life of Thomas—in the *N.Y. Nation* of Oct'r 19th, 1882. This specimen of criticism was fully answered, and its author, apparently, did not care to recur to the subject. There is no doubt that Thomas died in the belief that General Schofield was his enemy.



BOSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY



3 9999 06561 141 8

Boston Public Library
Central Library, Copley Square

Division of
Reference and Research Services

The Date Due Card in the pocket indicates the date on or before which this book should be returned to the Library.

Please do not remove cards from this pocket.

